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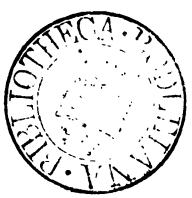

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TO

THE VERY REVEREND

HENRY EDWARD MANNING

THESE POEMS

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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PROLOGUE.

Prologue.

That sun-eyed Power which stands sublime
  Upon the rock that crowns our globe,
Her feet on all the spoils of time,
  With light eternal on her robe,

She, sovereign of the orb she guides,
  On Truth's broad sun may root a gaze
That deepens, onward as she rides,
  And shrinks not from the fontal blaze:

But they — her daughter Arts — must hide
  Within the cleft, content to see
Dim skirts of glory waving wide,
  And steps of parting Deity.

'Tis theirs to watch Religion break
  In types from Nature's frown or smile,
The legend rise from out the lake,
  The relic consecrate the isle.

'Tis theirs to adumbrate and suggest;
To point toward founts of buried lore;
Leaving, in reverence, unexpressed
What Man must know not, yet adore.

For where her court true Wisdom keeps,
'Mid loftier handmaids, one there stands
Dark as the midnight's starry deeps,
A Slave, gem-crowned, from Nubia's sands.

O thou whose light is in thy heart
Love-taught Submission! without thee
Science may soar awhile; but Art
Drifts barren o'er a shoreless sea.

MAY CAROLS.

PART I.

MAY CAROLS.

PART I.

I.

Who feels not, when the Spring once more,
  Stepping o'er Winter's grave forlorn
With winged feet, retreads the shore
  Of widowed Earth, his bosom burn?

As ordered flower succeeds to flower,
  And May the ladder of her sweets
Ascends, advancing hour by hour
  From scale to scale, what heart but beats?

Some Presence veiled, in fields and groves,
  That mingles rapture with remorse; —
Some buried joy beside us moves,
  And thrills the soul with such discourse

As they, perchance, that wondering pair
  Who to Emmaus bent their way,
Hearing, heard not. Like them our prayer
  We make: — "The night is near us . . Stay!"

With Paschal chants the churches ring;
  Their echoes strike along the tombs;
The birds their Hallelujahs sing;
  Each flower with floral incense fumes.

Our long-lost Eden seems restored;
  As on we move with tearful eyes
We feel through all the illumined sward
  Some upward-working Paradise.

II.

Upon Thy face, O God, Thy world
  Looks ever up in love and awe;
Thy stars, in circles onward hurled,
  Still weave the sacred chain of law.

In alternating antiphons
  Stream sings to stream and sea to sea;
And moons that set and sinking suns
  Obeisance make, O God, to Thee.

The swallow, winter's rage o'erblown,
  Again, on warm May breezes borne,
Revisiteth her haunts well-known;
  The lark is faithful to the morn.

The whirlwind, missioned with its wings
  To drown the fleet and fell the tower,
Obeys thee as the bird that sings
  Her love-chant in a fleeting shower.

Amid an ordered universe
  Man's spirit only dares rebel: —
With light, O God, its darkness pierce!
  With love its raging chaos quell!

III.

All but unutterable Name!
  Adorable, yet awful, sound!
Thee can the sinful nations frame
  Save with their foreheads to the ground?

Soul-searching and all-cleansing Fire!
  To see Thy countenance were to die:
Yet how beyond the bound retire
  Of Thy serene immensity?

Thou mov'st beside us, if the spot
  We change — a noteless, wandering tribe;
The orbits of our life and thought
  In Thee their little arcs describe.

In the dead calm, at cool of day,
  We hear Thy voice, and turn, and flee: —
Thy love outstrips us on our way:
  From Thee, O God, we fly — to Thee.

Sancta Maria.

IV.

MARY! To thee the humble cry.
What seek they? Gifts to Pride unknown.
They seek thy help — to pass thee by: —
They murmur, "Show us but thy Son."

The childlike heart shall enter in;
The virgin soul its God shall see: —
Mother, and maiden pure from sin,
Be thou the guide: the Way is He.

The mystery high of God made Man
Through thee to man is easier made:
Pronounce the consonant who can
Without the softer vowel's aid!

Dei Genitrix.

V.

I SEE Him: on thy lap He lies
'Mid that Judæan stable's gloom:
O sweet, O awful Sacrifice!
He smiles in sleep, yet knows His doom.

Thou gav'st Him life! But was not this
That life which knows no parting breath?
Unmeasured life? unwaning bliss?
Dread Priestess, lo! thou gav'st Him death!

Beneath the tree thy mother stood:
Beneath the cross thou too shalt stand:—
O Tree of Life! O bleeding Rood!
Thy shadow stretches far its hand.

That God who made the sun and moon
In swaddling bands lies dumb and bound!—
Love's Captive! darker prison soon
Awaits Thee in the garden ground.

He wakens. Paradise looks forth
Beyond the portals of the grave.
Life, life thou gavest! life to Earth,
Not Him. Thine Infant dies to save.

Virgo Virginum.

VI.

When from their lurking place the Voice
Of God dragged forth that fallen pair,
Still seemed the garden to rejoice;
The sinless Eden still was fair.

They, they alone, whose light of grace
But late made Paradise look dim,
Stood now, a blot upon its face,
Before their God; nor gazed on Him.

They glanced not up; or they had seen
In that severe, death-dooming eye
Unutterable depths serene
Of sadly-piercing sympathy.

Not them alone that Eye beheld,
But, by their side, that other Twain,
In whom the race whose doom was knelled
Once more should rise; once more should reign.

It saw that Infant crowned with blood;—
And her from whose predestined breast
That Infant ruled the worlds. She stood,
Her foot upon the serpent's crest!

Voice of primeval prophecy!
She who makes glad whatever heart
Adores her Son and Saviour, she
In thee, that hour, possessed a part!

VII.

Ascending from the convent-grates,
The children mount the woodland vale.
'Tis May-Day Eve; and Hesper waits
To light them, while the western gale

Blows softly on their bannered line:
And, lo! down all the mountain stairs
The shepherd children come to join
The convent children at their prayers.

They meet before Our Lady's fane:
On yonder central rock it stands,
Uplifting, ne'er invoked in vain,
That cross which blesses all the lands.

Before the porch the flowers are flung;
The lamp hangs glittering 'neath the Rood;
The "Maris Stella" hymn is sung;
Their chant each morn to be renewed.

Ah! if a secular muse might dare,
Far off, the children's song to catch;
To echo back, or burthen bear!—
As fitly might she hope to match

The linnet's note as theirs, 'tis true:
Yet, now and then, that borrowed tone,
Like sunbeams flashed on pine or yew,
Might shoot a sweetness through her own!

Adolescentulæ amaverunt te nimis.

VIII.

"Behold! the wintry rains are past;
The airs of midnight hurt no more:
The young maids love thee. Come at last:
Thou lingerest at the garden-door.

"Blow over all the garden; blow,
Thou wind that breathest of the south,
Through all the alleys winding low,
With dewy wing and honeyed mouth.

"But wheresoe'er thou wanderest, shape
Thy music ever to one Name:—
Thou too, clear stream, to cave and cape
Be sure thou whisper of the same.

"By every isle and bower of musk
Thy crystal clasps, as on it curls,
We charge thee, breathe it to the dusk;
We charge thee, grave it in thy pearls."

The stream obeyed. That Name he bore
Far out above the moon-lit tide.
The breeze obeyed. He breathed it o'er
The unforgetting pines; and died.

Mater Christi.

IX.

Daily beneath His mother's eyes
  Her Lamb matured His lowliness:
'Twas hers the lovely Sacrifice
  With fillet and with flower to dress.

Beside His little cross He knelt;
  With human-heavenly lips He prayed:
His Will within her will she felt;
  And yet His Will her will obeyed.

Gethsemané! when day is done
  Thy flowers with falling dews are wet:
Her tears fell never; for the sun
  Those tears that brightened never set.

The house was silent as that shrine
  The priest but entered once a year.
There shone His emblem. Light Divine!
  Thy presence and Thy power was here!

Mater Christi.

X.

He willed to lack; He willed to bear;
  He willed by suffering to be schooled;
He willed the chains of flesh to wear:
  Yet from her arms the worlds He ruled.

As tapers 'mid the noontide glow
  With merged yet separate radiance burn,
With human taste and touch, even so,
  The things He knew He willed to learn.

He sat beside the lowly door:
  His homeless eyes appeared to trace
In evening skies remembered lore,
  And shadows of His Father's face.

One only knew Him. She alone
  Who nightly to His cradle crept,
And lying like the moonbeam prone,
  Worshipped her Maker as He slept.

Mater Creatoris.

XI.

Bud forth a Saviour, Earth! fulfil
Thy first of functions, ever new!
Balm-dropping heaven, for aye distil
Thy grace like manna or like dew!

"To us, this day, a Child is born."
Heaven knows not mere historic facts:—
Celestial mysteries, night and morn,
Live on in ever-present Acts.

Calvary's dread Victim in the skies
On God's great altar rests even now:
The Pentecostal glory lies
For ever round the Church's brow.

From Son and Father, He, the Lord
Of Love and Life, proceeds alway:
Upon the first creative word
Creation, trembling, hangs for aye.

Nor less ineffably renewed
Than when on earth the tie began,
Is that mysterious Motherhood
Which re-creates the worlds and man.

Mater Salvatoris.

XII.

O Heart with His in just accord!
O Soul His echo, tone for tone!
O Spirit that heard, and kept His word!
O Countenance moulded like His own!

Behold, she seemed on Earth to dwell;
But, hid in light, alone she sat
Beneath the Throne ineffable,
Chanting her clear Magnificat.

Fed from the boundless heart of God,
The joy within her rose more high
And all her being overflowed,
Until the awful hour was nigh.

Then, then, there crept her spirit o'er
The shadow of that pain world-wide
Whereof her Son the substance bore: —
Him offering, half in Him she died;

Standing like that strange Moon, whereon
The mask of Earth lies dim and dead,
An orb of glory, shadow-strewn,
Yet girdled with a luminous thread.

Mater Dolorosa.

XIII.

She stood: she sank not. Slowly fell
Adown the Cross the atoning blood.
In agony ineffable
She offered still His own to God.

No pang of His her bosom spared;
She felt in Him its several power.
But she in heart His Priesthood shared:
She offered Sacrifice that hour.

"Behold thy Son!" Ah, last bequest!
It breathed His last farewell! The sword
Predicted pierced that hour her breast.
She stood: she answered not a word.

His own in John He gave. She wore
Thenceforth the Mother-crown of Earth.
O Eve! thy sentence too she bore;
Like thee in sorrow she brought forth.

Mater Dolorosa.

XIV.

From her He passed: yet still with her
The endless thought of Him found rest;
A sad but sacred branch of myrrh
For ever folded in her breast.

A Boreal winter void of light—
So seemed her widowed days forlorn:
She slept; but in her breast all night
Her heart lay waking till the morn.

Sad flowers on Calvary that grew;—
Sad fruits that ripened from the Cross;—
These were the only joys she knew:
Yet all but these she counted loss.

Love strong as Death! She lived through thee
That mystic life whose every breath
From Life's low harpstring amorously
Draws out the sweetened name of Death.

Love stronger far than Death or Life!
Thy martyrdom was o'er at last.
Her eyelids drooped; and without strife
To Him she loved her spirit passed.

Mater Admirabilis.

XV.

O Mother-Maid! to none save thee
Belongs in full a Parent's name;
So fruitful thy Virginity,
Thy Motherhood so pure from blame!

All other parents, what are they?
Thy types. In them thou stood'st rehearsed,
(As they in bird, and bud, and spray).
Thine Antitype? The Eternal First!

Prime Parent He: and next Him thou!
O'ershadowed by the Father's Might,
Thy "Fiat" was thy bridal vow;
Thine offspring He, the "Light of Light."

Her Son Thou wert: her Son Thou art,
O Christ! Her substance fed Thy growth: —
She shaped Thee in her virgin heart,
Thy Mother and Thy Father both!

Mater Amabilis.

XVI.

Mother of Love! Thy love to Him
  Cherub and seraph can but guess: —
A mother sees its image dim
  In her own breathless tenderness.

That infant touch none else could feel
  Vibrates like light through all her sense:
Far off she hears his cry: her zeal
  With lions fights in his defence.

Unmarked his youth goes by: his hair
  Still smooths she down, still strokes apart:
The first white thread that meets her there
  Glides, like a dagger, through her heart.

Men praise him: on her matron cheek
  There dawns once more a maiden red.
Of war, of battle-fields they speak:
  She sees once more his father dead.

In sickness — half in sleep — she hears
  His foot, ere yet that foot is nigh:
Wakes with a smile; and scarcely fears,
  If he but clasp her hand, to die.

Mater Filii.

XVII.

Others, the hours of youth gone by,
A mother's hearth and home forsake;
And, with the need, the filial tie
Relaxes, though it does not break.

But Thou wert born to be a Son.
God's Son in heaven, Thy will was this,
To pass the chain of Sonship on,
And bind in one whatever is.

Thou cam'st the *Son* of Man to be,
That so Thy brethren too might bear
Adoptive Sonship, and with Thee
Thy Sire's eternal kingdom share.

Transcendently the Son Thou art:
In this mysterious bond entwine,
As in a single, two-celled heart,
Thy natures, human and divine.

Mater Divinæ Gratiæ.

XVIII.

"THEY have no wine." The tender guest
Was grieved their feast should lack for aught.
He seemed to slight her mute request:
Not less the grace she wished He wrought.

O great in Love! O full of Grace!
That winds in thee, a river broad,
From Christ, with heaven-reflecting face,
Gladdening the City of thy God: —

Be this thy gift: that man henceforth
No more should creep through life content
(Draining the springs impure of earth)
With life's material element.

Let sacraments to sense succeed:
Let nought be winning, nought be good
Which fails of Him to speak, and bleed
Once more with His all-cleansing blood!

Mater Divinæ Gratiæ.

XIX.

The gifts a mother showers each day
Upon her softly-clamorous brood:
The gifts they value but for play,—
The graver gifts of clothes and food,—

Whence come they but from him who sows
With harder hand, and reaps, the soil;
The merit of his labouring brows,
The guerdon of his manly toil?

From Him the Grace: through her it stands
Adjusted, meted, and applied;
And ever, passing through her hands,
Enriched it seems, and beautified.

Love's mirror doubles Love's caress:
Love's echo to Love's voice is true:—
Their Sire the children love not less
Because they clasp a Mother too.

XX.

When April's sudden sunset cold
  Through boughs half-clothed with watery sheen
Bursts on the high, new-cowslipped wold,
  And bathes a world half gold half green,

Then shakes the illuminated air
  With din of birds; the vales far down
Grow phosphorescent here and there;
  Forth flash the turrets of the town;

Along the sky thin vapours scud;
  Bright zephyrs curl the choral main;
The wild ebullience of the blood
  Rings joy-bells in the heart and brain:

Yet in that music discords mix;
  The unbalanced lights like meteors play;
And, tired of splendours that perplex,
  The dazzled spirit sighs for May.

XXI.

As children when, with heavy tread,
  Men sad of face, unseen before,
Have borne away their mother dead—
  So stand the nations thine no more.

From room to room those children roam,
  Heart-stricken by the unwonted black:
Their house no longer seems their home:
  They search; yet know not what they lack.

Years pass: Self-Will and Passion strike
  Their roots more deeply day by day;
Old servants weep; and "how unlike"
  Is all the tender neighbours say.

And yet at moments, like a dream,
  A mother's image o'er them flits:
Like her's their eyes a moment beam;
  The voice grows soft; the brow unknits.

Such, Mary, are the realms once thine,
  That know no more thy golden reign.
Hold forth from heaven thy Babe divine!
  O make thine orphans thine again!

Maria Cliens.

XXII.

A LITTLE longer on the earth
That aged creature's eyes repose
(Though half their light and all their mirth
Are gone); and then for ever close.

She thinks that something done long since
Ill pleases God:—or why should He
So long delay to take her hence
Who waits His will so lovingly?

Whene'er she hears the church-bells toll
She lifts her head, though not her eyes,
With wrinkled hands, but youthful soul,
Counting her lip-worn rosaries.

And many times the weight of years
Falls from her in her waking dreams:
A child her mother's voice she hears:
To tend her father's steps she seems.

Once more she hears the whispering rains
On flowers and paths her childhood trod;
And of things present nought remains
Save the abiding sense of God.

Mary! make smooth her downward way!
Not dearer to the young thou art
Than her. Make glad her latest May;
And hold her, dying, on thy heart.

Fest. Visitationis.

XXIII.

The hilly region crossed with haste,
Its last dark ridge discerned no more,
Bright as the bow that spans a waste
She stood beside her Cousin's door;

And spake: — that greeting came from God!
Filled with the Spirit from on high
Sublime the aged Mother stood,
And cried aloud in prophecy, —

"Soon as thy voice had touched mine ears
The child in childless age conceived
Leaped up for joy! Throughout all years
Blessed the woman who believed."

Type of Electing Love! 'tis thine
To speak God's greeting from the skies!
Thy voice we hear: thy Babe divine
At once, like John, we recognise.

Within our hearts the second birth
Exults, though blind as yet and dumb.
The child of Grace his hands puts forth,
And prophesies of things to come.

XXIV.

Not yet, not yet! the Season sings
  Not of fruition yet, but hope;
Still holds aloft, like balanced wings,
  Her scales, and lets not either drop.

The white ash, last year's skeleton,
  Still glares, uncheered by leaf or shoot,
'Gainst azure heavens, and joy hath none
  In that fresh violet at her foot.

Yet Nature's virginal suspense
  Is not forgetfulness nor sloth:
Where'er we wander, soul and sense
  Discern a blindly working growth.

Her throne once more the daisy takes,
  That white star of our dusky earth;
And the sky-cloistered lark down-shakes
  Her passion of seraphic mirth.

'Twixt barren hills and clear cold skies
  She weaves, ascending high and higher,
Songs florid as those traceries
  Which took, of old, their name from fire.

Sing! thou that need'st no ardent clime
  To sun the sweetness from thy breast;
And teach us those delights sublime
  Wherein ascetic spirits rest!

Fest. Nativitatis B. V. M.

XXV.

When thou wert born the murmuring world
Rolled on, nor dreamed of things to be,
From joy to sorrow madly whirled;—
Despair disguised in revelry.

A princess thou of David's line;
The mother of the Prince of Peace;
That hour no royal pomps were thine:
The earth alone her boon increase

Before thee poured. September rolled
Down all the vine-clad Syrian slopes
Her breadths of purple and of gold;
And birds sang loud from olive tops.

Perhaps old foes, they knew not why,
Relented. From a fount long sealed
Tears rose, perhaps, to Pity's eye:
Love-harvests crowned the barren field.

The respirations of the year,
  At least, grew soft. O'er valleys wide
Pine-roughened crags again shone clear;
  And the great Temple, far descried,

To watchers, watching long in vain,
  To patriots grey, in bondage nursed,
Flashed back their hope—"The Second Fane
  In glory shall surpass the First!"

XXVI.

The moon, ascending o'er a mass
Of tangled yew and sable pine,
What sees she in yon watery glass?
A tearful countenance divine.

Far down, the winding hills between,
A sea of vapour bends for miles,
Unmoving. Here and there, dim-seen,
The knolls above it rise like isles.

The tall rock glimmers, spectre-white;
The cedar in its sleep is stirred;
At times the bat divides the night;
At times the far-off flood is heard.

Above, that shining blue!—below,
That shining mist! O, not more pure
Midwinter's landscape, robed in snow,
And fringed with frosty garniture.

The fragrance of the advancing year—
That, that assures us it is May.
Ah, tell me! in the heavenlier sphere
Must all of earth have passed away?

XXVII.

A DREAM came to me while the night
Thinned off before the breath of morn,
Which filled my soul with such delight
As hers who clasps a babe new-born.

I saw—in countenance like a child—
(Three years methought were hers, no more)
That maid and mother undefiled
The Saviour of the world who bore.

A nun-like veil was o'er her thrown;
Her locks by fillet-bands made fast,
Swiftly she climbed the steps of stone;—
Into the Temple swiftly passed.

Not once she paused her breath to take;
Not once cast back a homeward look:—
As longs the hart his thirst to slake,
When noontide rages, in the brook,

So longed that child to live for God;
So pined, from earth's enthralments free,
To bathe her wholly in the flood
Of God's abysmal purity!

Anna and Joachim from far
Their eyes on that white vision raised:
And when, like caverned foam or star
Cloud-hid, she vanished, still they gazed.

Fest. Purificationis.

XXVIII.

Twelve years had passed, and, still a child,
In brightness of the unblemished face,
Once more she scaled those steps, and smiled
On Him who slept in her embrace.

As in she passed there fell a calm
Around: each bosom slowly rose
Like the long branches of the palm
When under them the south wind blows.

The scribe forgot his wordy lore;
The chanted psalm was heard far off;
Hushed was the clash of golden ore;
And hushed the Sadducean scoff.

Type of the Christian Church! 'twas thine
To offer, first, to God that hour,
Thy Son—the Sacrifice Divine,
The Church's everlasting dower!

Great Priestess! round that aureoled brow
Which cloud or shadow ne'er had crossed,
Began there not that hour to grow
A milder dawn of Pentecost?

Fest. Epiphaniæ.

XXIX.

A VEIL is on the face of Truth:
She prophesies behind a cloud;
She ministers, in robes of ruth,
Nocturnal rites, and disallowed.

Eleusis hints, but dares not speak;
The Orphic minstrelsies are dumb;
Lost are the Sibyl's books, and weak
Earth's olden faith in Him to come.

But ah, but ah, that Orient Star!
On straw-roofed shed and large-eyed kine
It flashes, guiding from afar
The Magians to the Child Divine.

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh they bring—
Love, Worship, Life severe and hard:
Well pleased the symbol gifts the King
Accepts; and Truth is their reward.

Rejoice, O Sion, for thy night
Is past: the Lord, thy Light, is born.
The Gentiles shall behold thy light;
The kings walk forward in thy morn.

XXX.

The sunless day is sweeter yet
Than when the golden sun-showers danced
On bower new-glazed or rivulet;
And Spring her banners first advanced.

By wind unshaken hang in dream
The wind-flowers o'er their dark green lair;
And those thin poppy cups that seem
Not bodied forms, but woven of air.

Nor bird is heard; nor insect flits.
A tear-drop glittering on her cheek,
Composed but shadowed, Nature sits—
Yon primrose not more staid and meek.

The light of pensive hope unquenched
On those pathetic brows and eyes,
She sits, by silver dew-showers drenched,
Through which the chill spring-odours rise.

Was e'er on human countenance shed
So sweet a sadness? Once: no more.
Then when his charge the Patriarch led
Dream-warned to Egypt's distant shore.

Down on her Infant Mary gazed;
Her face the angels marked with awe;
Yet 'neath its dimness, undisplaced,
Looked forth that smile the Magians saw.

Legenda.

XXXI.

As, flying Herod, southward went
That Child and Mother, unamazed,
Into Egyptian banishment,
The weeders left their work, and gazed.

The bright One spake to them and said,
"When Herod's messengers demand,
"Passed not the Infant, Herod's dread,—
"Passed not the Infant through your land?

"Then shall ye answer make, and say,
"Behold, since first the corn was green
"No little Infant passed this way;
"No little Infant we have seen."

Earth heard; nor missed the Maid's intent—
As on the Flower of Eden passed
With Eden swiftness up she sent
A sun-browned harvest ripening fast.

By simplest words and sinless wheat
The messengers rode back beguiled;
And by that truthfullest deceit
Which saved the little new-born Child!

MAY CAROLS.

PART II.

PART II.

Conservabat in Corde.

I.

As every change of April sky
  Is imaged in a placid brook,
Her meditative memory
  Mirrored His every deed and look.

As suns through summer ether rolled
  Mature each growth the spring has wrought,
So Love's strong day-star turned to gold
  Her harvests of quiescent thought.

Her soul was as a vase, and shone
  Translucent to an inner ray;
Her Maker's finger wrote thereon
  A mystic Bible new each day.

Deep Heart! In all His sevenfold might
  The Paraclete with thee abode;
And, sacramented there in light,
  Bore witness of the things of God.

Ascensio Domini.

II.

Rejoice, O Earth, thy crown is won!
Rejoice, rejoice, ye heavenly host!
And thou, the Mother of the Son,
Rejoice the first; rejoice the most!

Who captive led captivity—
From Hades' void circumference
Who led the Patriarch Band on high,
There rules, and sends us graces thence.

Rejoice, glad Earth, o'er winter's grave
With altars wreathed and clarions blown;
And thou, the Race Redeemed, outbrave
The rites of nature with thine own!

Rejoice, O Mary! thou that long
Didst lean thy breast upon the sword—
Sad nightingale, the Spirit's song
That sang'st all night! He reigns, restored!

Rejoice! He goes, the Paraclete
To send! Rejoice! He reigns on high!
The sword lies broken at thy feet—
His triumph is thy victory!

Ascensio Domini.

III.

I TAKE this reed — I know the hand
That wields it must ere long be dust —
And write, upon the fleeting sand
Each wind can shake, the words, "I trust."

And if that sand one day was stone
And stood in courses near the sky,
For towers by earthquake overthrown,
Or mouldering piecemeal, what care I?

Things earthly perish: life to death
And death to life in turn succeeds.
The spirit never perisheth:
The chrysalis its Psyche breeds.

True life alone is that which soars
To Him who triumphed o'er the grave:
With Him, on life's eternal shores,
I trust one day a part to have.

Ah, hark! above the springing corn
That chime; in every breeze it swells!
Ye bells that wake the Ascension morn,
Ye give us back our Paschal bells!

Elias.

IV.

O THOU that rodest up the skies,
Thy task fulfilled, on steeds of fire, —
That somewhere, sealed from mortal eyes,
Some air immortal dost respire!

Thou that in heavenly beams enshrined,
In quiet lulled of soul and flesh,
With one great thought of God thy mind
Dost everlastingly refresh!

Where art thou? age succeeds to age;
Thou dost not hear their fret and jar:
With thy celestial hermitage
Successive winters wage not war.

Still as a corse with field-flowers strewn
Thou liest; on God thine eyes are bent:
And the fire-breathing stars alone
Look in upon thy cloudy tent.

Behold, there is a debt to pay!
Like Enoch, hid thou art on high:
But both shall back return one day,
To gaze once more on earth, and die.

V.

Stronger and steadier every hour
The pulses of the season's glee,
As toward her zenith climbs that Power
Which rules the purple revelry.

Trees, that from winter's grey eclipse
Of late but pushed their topmost plume,
Or felt with green-touched finger-tips
For spring, their perfect robes assume.

Like one that reads, not one that spells,
The unvarying rivulet onward runs:
And bird to bird, from leafier cells,
Sends forth more leisurely response.

Through the gorse covert bounds the deer:—
The gorse, whose latest splendours won
Make all the fulgent wolds appear
Bright as the pastures of the sun.

A balmier zephyr curls the wave;
More purple flames o'er ocean dance;
And the white breaker by the cave
Falls with more cadenced resonance;

While, vague no more, the mountains stand
With quivering line or hazy hue;
But drawn with finer, firmer hand,
And settling into deeper blue.

Speculum Justitiæ.

VI.

Not in Himself the Eternal Word
  Lay hid upon creation's day:
His Loveliness abroad He poured
  On all the worlds; and pours for aye.

Not in Himself the Incarnate Son,
  In whom Man's race is born again,
His glory hides. The victory won,
  He rose to send His "Gifts on Men."

In sacraments — His dread behests;
  In Providence; in granted prayer;
Before the time He manifests
  His glory, far as man may bear.

He shines not from a vault of gloom;
  The horizon vast His splendour paints:
Both heaven and earth His beams illume;
  His light is glorious in His saints.

He shines upon His Church — that Moon
  Who, in the watches of the night,
Transmits to man the entrusted boon;
  A sister orb of sacred light.

And thou, pure mirror of His grace! —
  As sun reflected in a sea —
So, Mary, feeblest eyes the face
  Of Him thou lovest discern in thee.

Numera.

VII.

Not for herself does Mary hold
  Among the saints that queenly throne,
Her seat predestined from of old;
  But for the brethren of her Son.

Pure thoughts that make to God their quest,
  With her find footing o'er the clouds;
Like those sea-crossing birds that rest
  A moment on the sighing shrouds.

In her our hearts, no longer nursed
  On dust, for spiritual beauty yearn;
From her our instincts, as at first,
  An upward gravitation learn.

Her distance makes her not remote:
  For in true love's supernal sphere
No more round self the affections float —
  More near to God, to man more near.

In her, the weary warfare past,
  The port attained, the exile o'er,
We see the Church's barque at last
  Close-anchored on the eternal shore!

Predestinata.

VIII.

Eternal Beauty, ere the spheres
Had rolled from out the gulfs of night,
Sparkled, through all the unnumbered years,
Before the Eternal Father's sight.

Like objects seen by Man in dream,
Or landscape glassed on morning mist,
Before His eyes it hung — a gleam
Flashed from the eternal Thought of Christ.

It stood the Archetype sublime
Of that fair world of finite things
Which, in the bands of Space and Time,
Creation's glittering verge enrings.

Star-like within the depths serene
Of that still vision, Mary, thou
With Him, thy Son, of God wert seen
Millenniums ere the lucid brow

Of Eve o'er Eden founts had bent, —
  Millenniums ere that second Pair
With dust the hopes of man had blent,
  And stained the brightness once so fair.

Elect of Creatures! Man in thee
  Beholds that primal Beauty yet, —
Sees all that Man was formed to be, —
  Sees all that Man can ne'er forget!

IX.

THREE worlds there are: — the first of Sense —
That sensuous earth which round us lies;
The next of Faith's Intelligence;
The third of Glory, in the skies.

The first is palpable, but base;
The second heavenly, but obscure;
The third is star-like in the face —
But ah! remote that world as pure!

Yet, glancing through our misty clime,
Some sparkles from that loftier sphere
Make way to earth; — then most what time
The annual spring-flowers re-appear.

Amid the coarser needs of earth
All shapes of brightness, what are they
But wanderers, exiled from their birth,
Or pledges of a happier day?

Yea, what is Beauty, judged aright,
But some surpassing, transient gleam;
Some smile from heaven, in waves of light,
Rippling o'er life's distempered dream?

Or broken memories of that bliss
Which rushed through first-born Nature's blood
When He who ever was, and is,
Looked down, and saw that all was good?

X.

Alas! not only loveliest eyes,
And brows with lordliest lustre bright,
But Nature's self — her woods and skies —
The credulous heart can cheat or blight.

And why? Because the sin of man
'Twixt Fair and Good has made divorce;
And stained, since Evil first began,
That stream so heavenly at its source.

O perishable vales and groves!
Your master was not made for you;
Ye are but creatures: human loves
Are to the great Creator due.

And yet, through Nature's symbols dim,
There are with keener sight that pierce
The outward husk, and reach to Him
Whose garment is the universe.

For this to earth the Saviour came
In flesh; in part for this He died;
That man might have, in soul and frame,
No faculty unsanctified.

That Fancy's self — so prompt to lead
Through paths disastrous or defiled —
Upon the Tree of Life might feed;
And Sense with Soul be reconciled.

Idolatria.

XI.

The fancy of an age gone by,
When Fancy's self to earth declined,
Still thirsting for Divinity,
Yet still, through sense, to Godhead blind,

Poor mimic of that Truth of old,
The patriarchs' hope — a faith revealed —
Compressed its God in mortal mould,
The prisoner of Creation's field.

Nature and Nature's Lord were one!
Then countless gods from cloud and stream
Glanced forth; from sea, and moon, and sun:
So ran the pantheistic dream.

And thus the All-Holy, thus the All-True,
The One Supreme, the Good, the Just,
Like mist was scattered, lost like dew,
And vanished in the wayside dust.

Mary! through thee the idols fell:
When He the nations longed for * came—
True God yet Man — with man to dwell,
The phantoms hid their heads for shame.

His place or thine removed, ere long
The bards would push the sects aside;
And lifted by the might of song
Olympus stand re-edified.

* "The Desire of the Nations."

Tota Pulchra.

XII.

A BROKEN gleam on wave and flower —
  A music that in utterance dies —
O Poets, and O Men! what more
  Is all that Beauty which ye prize?

And ah! how oft Corruption works
  Through that brief Beauty's force or wile!
How oft a gloom eternal lurks
  Beneath an evanescent smile!

But thou, serene and smiling light
  Of every grace redeemed from Sense,
In thee all harmonies unite
  That charm a pure Intelligence.

Whatever teaches mind or heart
  To God by loveliest types to mount,
Mary, is thine. Of each true Art
  The parent art thou, and the fount.

Those pictures, fair as moon or star,
The ages dear to Faith brought forth,
Formed but the illumined calendar
Of her, that Church which knows thy worth.

Not less doth Nature teach through thee
That mystery hid in hues and lines:
Who loves thee not hath lost the key
To all her sanctuaries and shrines.

Stella Matutina.

XIII.

Shine out, O Star, and sing the praise
Of that unrisen Sun whose glow
Thus feeds thee with thine earlier rays —
The secret of thy song we know.

Thou sing'st that Sun of Righteousness,
Sole light of this benighted globe,
Whose beams, reflected, dressed and dress
His Mother in her shining robe.

Pale Lily, pearled around with dew,
Lift high that heaven-illumined vase,
And sing the glories ever new
Of her, God's chalice, "full of grace."

Cerulean Ocean, fringed with white,
That wear'st her colours evermore,
In all thy pureness, all thy might,
Resound her name from shore to shore.

That fringe of foam, when drops the sun
To-night, a sanguine stain shall wear: —
Thus Mary's heart had strength, alone,
The passion of her Lord to share.

"Janua Coli."

XIV.

The night through yonder cloudy cleft,
With many a lingering last regard,
Withdraws — but slowly — and hath left
Her mantle on the dewy sward.

The lawns with silver dews are strewn;
The winds lie hushed in cave and tree;
Nor stirs a flower, save one alone
That bends beneath the earliest bee.

Peace over all the garden broods;
Pathetic sweets the thickets throng;
Like breath the vapour o'er the woods
Ascends — dim woods without a song:

Or hangs, a shining, fleece-like mass
O'er half yon lake that winds afar
Among the forests, still as glass,
The mirror of that Morning Star

Which, halfway wandering from the sky,
  Amid the rose of morn delays
And (large and less alternately)
  Bends down a lustrous, tearful gaze.

Mother and home of spirits blest!
  Bright gate of Heaven and golden bower!
Thy best of blessings, love and rest,
  Depart not till on earth thou shower!

XV.

If sense of Man's unworthiness
With Nature's blameless looks at strife,
Should wake with wakening May, and press
New-born contentment out of life:

If thoughts of sable breed and blind
Should stamp upon the springing flower,
Or blacker memories haunt the mind
As ravens haunt the ruined tower:—

O then how sweet in heart to breathe
Those pure Judean gales once more;
From Bethlehem's crib to Nazareth
In heart to tread that Syrian shore!

To watch that star-like Infant bring
To one of soul as clear and white
May-lilies, fresh from Siloa's spring,
Or Passion-flower with May-dews bright!

To follow, earlier yet, the feet
Of her the "hilly land" who trod
With true love's haste, intent to greet
That aged saint beloved of God.

Before her, like a stream let loose,
The long vale's flowerage, winding, ran:
Nature resumed her Eden use;
And Earth was reconciled with Man.

Causa Nostræ Lætitiæ.

XVI.

WHATE'ER is floral on the earth
To thee, O Flower, of right belongs;
Whate'er is musical in mirth,
Whate'er is jubilant in songs.

Childhood and springtide never cease
For him thy freshness keeps from stain:
Dew-drenched for him, like Gideon's fleece,
The dusty paths of life remain.

Spirit of Brightness and of Bliss!
Thou threaten'st none! A sinless lure,
Thy fragrance and thy gladsomeness
Draw on to Christ; to Christ secure.

Hope, Hope is Strength! That joy of thine
To us is Glory's earliest ray!
Through Faith's dim air, O star benign,
Look down, and light our onward way!

Stella Maris.

XVII.

I LEFT at morn that blissful shore
O'er which the fruit-bloom fluttered free;
And sailed the wildering waters o'er,
Till sunset streaked with blood the sea.

My sleep the hoarse sea-thunders broke,
And sudden chill. Their feet foam-hid,
Huge cliffs leaned out, through vapour-smoke,
Like tower, and tomb, and pyramid.

In the black shadow, ghostly white
The breaker raced o'er foaming shoals:
From caverns of eternal night
Came wailings, as of suffering souls.

Sudden, through clearing mists, the star
Of ocean o'er the billow rose:
Down dropped the elemental war;
Tormented chaos found repose.

Star of the ocean! dear art thou,
  Ah! not to earth and heaven alone:
The suffering Church, when shines thy brow
  Upon her penance, stays her moan.

The Holy Souls draw in their breath;
  The sea of anguish rests in peace;
And, from beyond the gates of death,
  Up swell the anthems of release.

XVIII.

Blossom for ever, blossoming Rod!
Thou did'st not blossom once to die:
That Life which, issuing forth from God,
Thy life enkindled, runs not dry,

Without a root in sin-stained earth,
'Twas thine to bud Salvation's flower.
No single soul the Church brings forth
But blooms from thee and is thy dower.

Rejoice, O Eve! thy promise waned;
Transgression nipt thy flower with frost:
But, lo! a mother man hath gained
Holier than she in Eden lost.

Anita.

XIX.

While all the breathless woods aloof
  Lie hush'd in noontide's deep repose,
That dove, sun-warmed on yonder roof,
  With what a grave content she coos!

One note for her! Deep streams run smooth:
  The ecstatic song of transience tells.
O what a depth of loving truth
  In thy divine contentment dwells!

All day, with down-dropt lids, I sat,
  In trance; the present scene forgone.
When Hesper rose, on Ararat,
  Methought, not English hills, he shone.

Back to the ark, the waters o'er,
  The primal dove pursued her flight:
A branch of that blest tree she bore
  Which feeds the Church with holy light.

I heard her rustling through the air
  With sliding plume — no sound beside,
Save the sea-sobbings everywhere,
  And sighs of that subsiding tide.

Magnificat.

XX.

She took the timbrel, as the tide
Rushed, refluent, up the Red Sea shore:
"The Lord hath triumphed," she cried:
Her song rang out above the roar

Of lustral waves that, wall to wall,
Fell back upon the host abhorred:
Above the gloomy watery pall,
As eagles soar, her anthem soared.

Miriam, rejoice! a mightier far
Than thou, one day shall sing with thee!
Who rises, brightening like a star
Above yon bright baptismal sea?

That harp which David touched who rears
Heaven-high above those waters wide?
The Prophet-Queen! Throughout all years
She sings the Triumph of the Bride!

Mystica.

XXI.

As pebbles flung for sport, that leap
Along the superficial tide,
But enter not those chambers deep
Wherein the beds of pearl abide;

Such those light minds that, grazing, spurn
The surface text of Sacred Lore,
Yet ne'er its deeper sense discern,
Its halls of mystery ne'er explore.

Ah! not for such the unvalued gems;
The priceless pearls of Truth they miss:
Not theirs the starry diadems
That light God's temple in the abyss!

Ah! not for such to gaze on her
That moves through all that empire pale;
At every shrine doth minister,
Yet never drops her vestal veil.

"The letter kills." Make pure thy Will;
So shalt thou pierce the Text's disguise:
Till then, revere the veil that still
Hides truth from truth-affronting eyes.

Expectatio.

XXII.

A sweet exhaustion seems to hold
In spells of calm the shrouded eve:
The gorse itself a beamless gold
Puts forth:—yet nothing seems to grieve.

The dewy chaplets hang on air;
The willowy fields are silver-grey;
Sad odours wander here and there;—
And yet we feel that it is May.

Relaxed, and with a broken flow,
From dripping bowers low carols swell
In mellower, glassier tones, as though
They mounted through a bubbling well.

The crimson orchis scarce sustains
Upon its drenched and drooping spire
The burden of the warm soft rains;
The purple hills grow nigh and nigher.

Nature, suspending lovely toils,
On expectations lovelier broods,
Listening, with lifted hand, while coils
The flooded rivulet through the woods.

She sees, drawn out in vision clear,
A world with summer radiance drest,
And all the glories of that year
Which sleeps within her virgin breast.

XXIII.

Still on the gracious work proceeds;—
  The good, great tidings preached anew
Yearly to green enfranchised meads,
  And fire-topped woodlands flushed with dew.

Yon cavern's mouth we scarce can see;
  Yon rock in gathering bloom lies meshed;
And all the wood-anatomy
  In thickening leaves is over-fleshed.

That hermit oak which frowned so long
  Upon the spring with barren spleen,
Yields to the holy Siren's song,
  And bends above her goblet green.

Young maples, late with gold embossed,—
  Lucidities of sun-pierced limes,
No more surprise us—merged and lost
  Like prelude notes in deepening chimes.

Disordered beauties and detached
  Demand no more a separate place:
The abrupt, the startling, the unmatched,
  Submit to graduated grace;

While upward from the ocean's marge
  The year ascends with statelier tread
To where the sun his golden targe
  Finds, setting, on yon mountain's head.

Turris Eburnea.

XXIV.

This scheme of worlds, which vast we call,
Is only vast compared with man:
Compared with God, the One yet All,
Its greatness dwindles to a span.

A Lily with its isles of buds
Asleep on some unmeasured sea:—
O God, the starry multitudes,
What are they more than this to Thee?

Yet girt by Nature's petty pale
Each tenant holds the place assigned
To each in Being's awful scale:—
The last of creatures leaves behind

The abyss of nothingness: the first
Into the abyss of Godhead peers;
Waiting that vision which shall burst
In glory on the eternal years.

Tower of our Hope! through thee we climb
  Finite creation's topmost stair;
Through thee from Sion's height sublime
  Towards God we gaze through purer air.

Infinite distance still divides
  Created from Creative Power;
But all which intercepts and hides
  Lies dwarfed by that surpassing Tower!

XXV.

Who doubts that thou art finite? Who
  Is ignorant that from Godhead's height
To what is loftiest here below
  The interval is infinite?

O Mary! with that smile thrice-blest
  Upon their petulance look down;—
Their dull negation, cold protest—
  Thy smile will melt away their frown!

Show them thy Son! That hour their heart
  Will beat and burn with love like thine;
Grow large; and learn from thee that art
  Which communes best with things divine.

The man who grasps not what is best
  In creaturely existence, he
Is narrowest in the brain; and least
  Can grasp the thought of Deity.

XXVI.

They seek not; or amiss they seek;—
The cold slight heart and captious brain:—
To Love alone those instincts speak
Whose challenge never yet was vain.

True Gate of Heaven! As light through glass,
So He who never left the sky
To this low earth was pleased to pass
Through thine unstained Virginity.

Summed up in thee our hearts behold
The glory of created things:—
From His, thy Son's, corporeal mould
Looks forth the eternal King of Kings!

XXVII.

A SUDDEN sun-burst in the woods,
But late sad Winter's palace dim!
O'er quickening boughs and bursting buds
Pacific glories shoot and swim.

As when some heart, grief-darkened long,
Conclusive joy by force invades—
So swift the new-born splendours throng;
Such lustre swallows up the shades.

The sun we see not; but his fires
From stem to stem obliquely smite,
Till all the forest aisle respires
The golden-tongued and myriad light.

The caverns blacken as their brows
With floral fire are fringed; but all
Yon sombre vault of meeting boughs
Turns to a golden fleece its pall,

As o'er it breeze-like music rolls.
O Spring, thy limit-line is crossed!
O Earth, some orb of singing Souls
Brings down to thee *thy* Pentecost!

Dominica Pentecostes.

XXVIII.

Clear as those silver trumps of old
That woke Judea's jubilee;
Strong as the breeze of morning, rolled
O'er answering woodlands from the sea,

That matutinal anthem vast
Which winds, like sunrise, round the globe,
Following the sunrise, far and fast,
And trampling on his fiery robe.

Once more the Pentecostal torch
Lights on the courses of the year:
The "upper chamber" of the Church
Is thrilled once more with joy and fear.

Who lifts her brow from out the dust?
Who fixes on a world restored
A gaze like Eve's, but more august?
Who bends it heaven-ward on her Lord?

It is the Birthday of the Bride.
The new begins; the ancient ends:
From all the gates of Heaven flung wide
The promised Paraclete descends.

He who o'er-shadowed Mary once
O'ershades Humanity to-day;
And bids her fruitful prove in sons
Co-heritors with Christ for aye.

Dominica Pentecostes.

XXIX.

The Form decreed of tree and flower,
The shape susceptible of life,
Without the infused vivific Power,
Were but a slumber or a strife.

He whom the plastic hand of God
Himself created out of earth
Remained a statue and a clod
Till spirit infused to life gave birth.

So, till that hour, the Church. In Christ
Her awful structure, nerve and bone,
Though built, and shaped, and organised,
Existed but in skeleton;

Till down on that predestined frame,
Complete through all its sacred mould,
The Pentecostal Spirit came,—
The self-same Spirit who of old

Creative o'er the waters moved.
Thenceforth the Church, made One and Whole,
Arose in Him, and lived, and loved—
His Temple she; and He her Soul.

Turris Davidica.

XXX.

The towered City loves thee well,
Strong Tower of David's House! In thee
She hails the unvanquished citadel
That frowns o'er Error's subject sea.

With magic might that Tower repels
A host that breaks where foe is none,—
No foe but statued Saints in cells
High-ranged, and smiling in the sun.

There stands Augustin; Leo there;
And Bernard, with a maiden face
Like John's; and, strong at once and fair,
That Spirit-Pythian, Athanase.

Upon thy star-surrounded height
God's angel keepeth watch and ward;
And sunrise flashes thence ere night
Hath left dark street and dewy sward.

"Tu sola interemisti omnes Hæreses."

XXXI.

What tenderest hand uprears on high
The standard of Incarnate God?
Successive portents that deny
Her Son, who tramples? She who trod

On Satan erst with starlike scorn!
Ah! never Alp looked down through mist
As she, that whiter star of morn,
Through every cloud that darkens Christ!

Roll back the centuries:—who were those
That, age by age, their Lord denied?
Their seats they set with Mary's foes:—
They mocked the Mother as the Bride.

Of such was Arius; and of such
* He whom the Ephesian Sentence felled.
† Her Title triumphed. At the touch
Of Truth the insurgent rout was quelled.

Back, back the hosts of Hell were driven
As forth that sevenfold thunder rolled:—
And in the Church's mystic Heaven
There was great silence as of old.

* Nestorius. † Dei-para.

MAY CAROLS.

PART III.

PART III.

I.

In vain thine altars do they heap
With blooms of violated May
Who fail the words of Christ to keep;
Thy Son who love not, nor obey.

Their songs are as a serpent's hiss;
Their praise a poniard's poisoned edge;
Their offering taints, like Judas' kiss,
Thy shrine; their vows are sacrilege.

Sadly from such thy countenance turns:
Thou canst not stretch thy Babe to such
(Albeit for all thy pity yearns)
As greet Him with a leper's touch.

Who loveth thee must love thy Son.
Weak Love grows strong thy smile beneath:
But nothing comes from nothing; none
Can reap Love's harvest out of Death.

Babylon.

II.

The watchman watched along the walls:
And lo! an hour or more ere light
Loud rang his trumpet. From their halls
The revellers rushed into the night.

There hung a terror on the air;
There moved a terror under ground;—
The hostile hosts, heard everywhere,
Within, without—were nowhere found.

"The Christians to the lions! Ho!"—
Alas! self-tortured crowds, let be!
Let go your wrath; your fears let go:
Ye gnaw the net, but cannot flee.

Ye drank from out Orestes' cup;
Orestes' Furies drave ye wild.
Who conquers from on high? Look up!
A Woman, holding forth a Child!

III.

The golden rains are dashed against
  Those verdant walls of lime and beech
With which our happy vale is fenced
  Against the north; yet cannot reach

The stems that lift yon leafy crest
  High up above their dripping screen:
The chestnut fans are downward pressed
  On banks of bluebell hid in green.

White vapours float along the glen,
  Or rise from every sunny brake;—
A pause amid the gusts—again
  The warm shower sings across the lake.

Sing on, all-cordial showers, and bathe
  The deepest root of loftiest pine!
The cowslip dimmed, the "primrose rathe"
  Refresh; and drench in nectarous wine

Yon fruit-tree copse, all blossomed o'er
  With forest-foam and crimson snow—
Behold! above it bursts once more
  The world-embracing, heavenly bow!

Sedes Sapientiæ.

IV.

O THAT the wordy war might cease!
Self-sentenced Babel's strife of tongues!
Loud rings the arena. Athletes, peace!
Nor drown the wild-dove's Song of Songs.

Alas, the wanderers feel their loss:
With tears they seek—ah, seldom found—
That peace whose volume is the Cross;
That peace which leaves not holy ground.

Mary, who loves true peace loves thee!
A happy child, not taught of Scribes,
He stands beside the Church's knee;
From her the lore of Christ imbibes.

Hourly he drinks it from her face:
For there his eyes, he knows not how,
The face of Him she loves can trace,
And, crowned with thorns, the sovereign brow.

"Behold! all colours blend in white!
Behold! all Truths have root in Love!"
So sings, half lost in light of light,
Her Song of Songs the mystic Dove.

Sedes Sapientiæ.

V.

"Wisdom hath built herself a House,
And hewn her out her pillars seven."*
Her wine is mixed. Her guests are those
Who share the harvest-home of heaven.

Who guards the gates? The flaming sword
Of Penance. Every way it turns:
But healing from on high is poured
On each that fire seraphic burns.

The fruits upon her table piled
Are gathered from the Tree of Life.
Around are ranged the undefiled,
And those that conquered in the strife.

Who tends the guests? Who smiles away
Sad memories? bids misgiving cease?
A crowned one countenanced like the day—
The Mother of the Prince of Peace.

* Proverbs ix. 1.

VI.

Here, in this paradise of light,
  Superfluous were both tree and grass:
Enough to watch the sunbeams smite
  Yon white flower sole in the morass.

From his cold nest the skylark springs;
  Sings, pauses, sings; shoots up anew;
Attains his topmost height, and sings
  Quiescent in his vault of blue.

With eyes half-closed I watch that lake
  Flashed from whose plane the sun-sparks fly,
Like souls new-born that shoot and break
  From thy deep sea, Eternity!

Ripplings of sunlight from the wave
  Ascend the white rock, high and higher;
Soft gurglings fill the satiate cave;
  Soft airs amid the reeds expire.

All round the lone and luminous meer
  The dark world stretches, far and free:
That skylark's song alone I hear;
  That flashing wave alone I see.

O myriad Earth! Where'er thy Word
  Makes way indeed into the soul,
An answering echo there is stirred: —
  Of thee the part is as the whole.

Fest. B. V. M. de Monte Carmelo.

VII.

Carmel, with Alp and Apennine,
Low whispers in the wind that blows
Beneath the Eastern stars, ere shine
The lights of morning on their snows.

Of thee, Elias, Carmel speaks,
And that white cloud, so small at first,
Thou saw'st approach the mountain peaks
To quench a dying nation's thirst.

On Carmel, like a sheathed sword,
Thy monks abode till Jesus came;
On Carmel then they served their Lord;—
Then Carmel rang with Mary's name.

Blow over all the garden; blow
O'er all the garden of the West,
Balm-breathing Orient! Whisper low
The secret of thy spicy nest.

"Who from the Desert upward moves
Like cloud of incense onward borne?
Who, moving, rests on Him she loves?
Who mounts from regions of the Morn?

"Behold! The apple-tree beneath —
There where of old thy Mother fell —
I raised thee up. More strong than Death
Is Love; — more strong than Death or Hell."*

* Cant. viii. 5.

VIII.

Come from the midnight mountain tops,
The mountains where the panthers play:
Descend; the veil of darkness drops;
Come fair and fairer than the day!

Our hearts are wounded with thine eyes:
They character in words of light
Thereon the mystery of the skies:
The "Name o'er every name" they write.

Come from thy Lebanonian peaks
Whose sacerdotal cedars nod
Above the world, when morning breaks—
The Mountain of the House of God.

The land thou lov'st—O well is she!
The ploughers on her back may plough;
But in her vales upgrows the Tree
Of Life, and binds the bleeding brow.

Advocata Nostra.

IX.

I saw, in visions of the night,
. Creation like a sea outspread,
With surf of stars and storm of light
And movements manifold and dread.

Then lo, within a Human Hand
A Sceptre moved that storm above:
Thereon, as on the golden wand
Of kings new-crowned, there sat a Dove.

Beneath her gracious weight inclined
That Sceptre drooped. The waves had rest:
And Sceptre, Hand, and Dove were shrined
Within a glassy ocean's breast.

His Will it was that placed her there!
He at whose word the tempests cease
Upon that Sceptre planted fair
That peace-bestowing type of Peace!

Thronus Trinitatis.

X.

Each several Saint the Church reveres,
What is he but an altar whence
Some separate Virtue ministers
To God a separate frankincense?

Each beyond each, not made of hands,
They rise, a ladder angel-trod:
Star-bright the last and loftiest stands—
That altar is the Throne of God.

Lost in the uncreated light
A Form all Human rests thereon:
His shade from that surpassing height
Beyond creation's verge is thrown.

Him "Lord of lords, and King of kings,"
The chorus of all worlds proclaim:—
"He took from her," one angel sings
At intervals, "His Human frame."

Cultus Sanctorum.

XI.

He seemed to linger with them yet:
But late ascended to the skies,
They saw—ah, how could they forget?—
The form they loved, the hands, the eyes.

From anchored boat—in lane or field—
He taught; He blessed, and brake the bread;
The hungry filled; the afflicted healed;
And wept, ere yet he raised, the dead.

But when, like some supreme of hills,
Whose feet shut out its summit's snow,
That, hid no longer, heavenward swells
As further from its base we go,

Abroad His perfect Godhead shone,
Each hour more plainly kenned on high,
And clothed His Manhood with the sun,
And, cleansing, hurt the adoring eye;

Then fixed His Church a deepening gaze
  Upon His Saints. With Him they sate,
And, burning in that Godhead's blaze,
  They seemed that Manhood to dilate.

His were they: of His likeness each
  Had grace some fragment to present,
And nearer brought to mortal reach
  Of Him some line or lineament.

Fest. S. S. Trinitatis.

XII.

Fall back, all worlds, into the abyss,
That man may contemplate once more
That which He ever was Who is:—
The Eternal Essence we adore.

Angelic hierarchies! recede
Beyond extinct creation's shade!
What were ye at the first? Decreed:—
Decreed, not fashioned; thought, not made!

Like wind the untold Millenniums passed.
Sole-throned He sat; yet not alone:
Godhead in Godhead still was glassed;—
The Spirit was breathed from Sire and Son.

Prime Virgin, separate and sealed;
Nor less of social love the root;
Dimly in lowliest shapes revealed;
Entire in every Attribute;—

Thou liv'st in all things, and around;
To Thee external is there nought;
Thou of the boundless art the bound;
And still Creation is Thy Thought.

In vain, O God, our wings we spread;
So distant art Thou—yet so nigh.
Remains but this, when all is said,
For Thee to live; in Thee to die.

XIII.

Where is the crocus now, that first,
When earth was dark and heaven was grey,
A prothalamion flash, up-burst?
Ah, then we deemed not of the May!

The clear stream stagnates in its course;
Narcissus droops in pallid gloom;
Far off the hills of golden gorse
A dusk Saturnian face assume.

The seeded dandelion dim
Casts loose its air-globe on the breeze;
Along the grass the swallows skim;
The cattle couch among the trees.

Yet ever lordlier loveliness
Succeeds to that which slips our hold:
The thorn assumes her snowy dress;
Laburnum bowers their robes of gold.

Down waves successive of the year
We drop; but drop once more to rise,
With ampler view, as on we steer,
Of lovelier lights and loftier skies.

"Ad Nives."

XIV.

Before the morn began to break
The bright One bent above that pair
Whose childless vows aspired to take
The mother of their Lord for heir.

'Twas August: even in midnight shade
The roofs were hot, and hot the street:—
"Build me a fane," the vision said,
"Where first your eyes the snow shall meet."*

With snow the Esquiline was strewn
At morn!—Fair Legend! who but thinks
Of thee, when first the breezes blown
From summer Alp to Alp he drinks?

He stands: he hears the torrents dash:
Slowly the vapours break; and lo!
Through chasms of endless azure flash
The peaks of everlasting snow.

* Santa Maria Maggiore, on the Esquiline, at Rome.

He stands; he listens; on his ear
  Swells softly forth some virgin hymn:
The white procession windeth near,
  With glimmering lights in sunshine dim.

Mother of Purity and Peace!
  They sing the Saviour's name and thine:—
Clothe them for ever with the fleece
  Unspotted of thy Lamb Divine!

Fest. Puritatis.

XV.

Far down the bird may sing of love;
The honey-bearing blossom blow:
But hail, ye hills that rise above
The limit of perpetual snow!

O Alpine City, with thy walls
Of rock eterne and spires of ice,
Where torrent still to torrent calls,
And precipice to precipice;—

How like that holier City thou,
The heavenly Salem's earthly porch,
Which rears among the stars her brow,
And plants firm feet on earth—the Church!

"Decaying, ne'er to be decayed,"
Her woods, like thine, renew their youth:
Her streams, in rocky arms embayed,
Are clear as virtue, strong as truth.

At times the lake may burst its dam;
Black pine and rock the valley strew;
But o'er the ruin soon the lamb
Its flowery pasture crops anew.

She, too, in regions near the sky
Up-piles her cloistered snows, and thence
Diffuses gales of purity
O'er fields of consecrated sense.

On those still heights a love-light glows
The plains from them alone receive;—
Not all the Lily! There thy Rose,
O Mary, triumphs, morn and eve!

XVI.

Cloud-piercing Mountains! Chance and Change
More high than you their thrones advance.
Self-vanquished Nature's rockiest range
Gives way before them like the trance

Of one that wakes. From morn to eve
Through fissured clefts her mists make way;
At Night's cold touch they freeze, and cleave
Her crags; and, with a Titan's sway,

Flake off and peel the rotting rocks,
And heap the glacier tide below
With isles of sand and floating blocks,
As leaves on streams when tempests blow.

Lo, thus the great decree all-just,
O Earth, thy mountains hear; and learn
From fire and frost its import — "dust
Thou art; and shalt to dust return."

He only *is* Who ever was;
The All-measuring Mind; the Will Supreme.
Rocks, mountains, worlds, like bubbles pass:
God is; the things not God but seem.

Fœderis Arca.

XVII.

From end to end, O God, Thy Will
With swift yet ordered might doth reach:
Thy purposes their scope fulfil
In sequence, resting each on each.

In Thee is nothing sudden; nought
From harmony and law that swerves:
The orbits of Thine act and thought
In soft succession wind their curves.

O then with what a gradual care
Must thou have shaped that sacred shrine,
That Ark of grace, ordained to bear
The burthen of the Babe divine!

How many a gift within her breast
Lay stored, for Him a couch to strew!
How many a virtue lined His nest!
How many a grace beside Him grew!

Of love on love what sweet excess!
How deep a faith! a hope how high!—
Mary! on earth of thee we guess;
But we shall see thee when we die!

Domus Aurea.

XVIII.

She mused upon the Saints of old;
  Their toils, their pains, she longed to share:
Of Him she mused, the Child foretold;
  To Him her hands she stretched in prayer.

No moment passed without its crown;
  And each new grace was used so well
It drew some tenfold talent down,
  Some miracle on miracle.

O golden House! O boundless store
  Of wealth by heavenly commerce won!
When God Himself could give no more,
  He gave thee all; He gave His Son!

Blessed the Mother of her Lord!
  And yet for this more blessed still,
Because she heard and kept His Word —
  High servant of His sovereign Will!

Respexit Humilitatem.

XIX

Not all thy purity, although
The whitest moon that ever lit
The peaks of Lebanonian snow
Shone dusk and dim compared with it;—

Not that great love of thine, whose beams
Transcended in their virtuous heat
Those suns which melt the ice-bound streams,
And make earth's pulses newly beat:—

It was not these that from the sky
Drew down to thee the Eternal Word:
He looked on thy humility;
He knew thee, "Handmaid of thy Lord."

Let no one claim with thee a part;
Let no one, Mary, name thy name,
While, aping God, upon his heart
Pride sits, a demon robed in flame.

Proud Vices, die! Where Sin has place
Be Sin's familiar self-disgust.
Proud Virtues, doubly die; that Grace
At last may burgeon from your dust.

Respexit Humilitatem.

XX.

Supreme among the things create
  Omnipotence revealed below,
More swift than thought, more strong than fate,
  Such, such, Humility, art thou!

All strength beside is weakness. Might
  Belongs to God: and they alone,
Self-emptied souls and seeming-slight,
  Are filled with God and share his throne.

O Mary! strong wert thou and meek;
  Thy meekness gave thee strength divine:
Thyself in nothing didst thou seek;
  Therefore thy Maker made Him thine.

Through Pride our parents disobeyed;
  Rebellious Sense avenged the crime:
The soul, the body's captive made,
  Became the branded thrall of time.

With barrenness the earth was cursed;
  Inviolate she brought forth no more
Her fruits, nor freely as at first: —
  Thou cam'st, her Eden to restore!

Low breathes the wind upon the string;
  The harp, responsive, sounds in turn:
Thus o'er thy Soul the Spirit's wing
  Creative passed; and Christ was born.

"Sine Labe originali Concepta."

XXI.

Met in a point * the circles twain
Of temporal and eternal things
Embrace, close linked. Redemption's chain
Drops thence to earth its myriad rings.

In either circle, from of old,
That point of meeting stood decreed; —
Twin mysteries cast in one deep mould,
"The Woman," and "the Woman's Seed."

Mary, long ages ere thy birth
Resplendent with Salvation's Sign,
In thee a stainless hand the earth
Put forth, to meet the Hand Divine!

First trophy of all-conquering Grace,
First victory of that Blood all pure,
Of man's once fair but fallen race
Thou stood'st, the monument secure.

The Word made Flesh! the Way! the Door!
The link that dust with Godhead blends!
Through Him the worlds their God adore: —
Through thee that God to man descends.

* The Incarnation.

"Sine Labe originali Concepta."

XXII.

A SOUL-LIKE sound, subdued yet strong,
A whispered music, mystery-rife,
A sound like Eden airs among
The branches of the Tree of Life —

At first no more than this; at last
The voice of every land and clime,
It swept o'er Earth, a clarion blast:
Earth heard, and shook with joy sublime.

Mary! thy triumph was her own.
In thee she saw her prime restored:
She saw ascend a spotless Throne
For Him, her Saviour, and her Lord.

The Church had spoken. She that dwells
Sun-clad with beatific light,
From Truth's unvanquished citadels,
From Sion's Apostolic height,

Had stretched her sceptred hands, and pressed
The seal of Faith, defined and known,
Upon that Truth till then confessed
By Love's instinctive sense alone.

XXIII.

Brow-bound with myrtle and with gold,
  Spring, sacred now from blasts and blights,
Lifts in a firm, untrembling hold
  Her chalice of fulfilled delights.

Confirmed around her queenly lip
  The smile late wavering, on she moves;
And seems through deepening tides to step
  Of steadier joys and larger loves.

The stony Ash itself relents,
  Into the blue embrace of May
Sinking, like old impenitents
  Heart-touched at last; and, far away,

The long wave yearns along the coast
  With sob suppressed, like that which thrills
(While o'er the altar mounts the Host)
  Some chapel on the Irish hills.

Corpus Christi.

XXIV.

Rejoice, O Mary! and be glad,
Thou Church triumphant here below!
He cometh, in meekest emblems clad;
Himself he cometh to bestow!

That body which thou gav'st, O Earth,
He giveth back — that Flesh, that Blood;
Born of the Altar's mystic birth;
At once thy Worship and thy Food.

He who of old on Calvary bled
On all thine altars lies to-day,
A bloodless Sacrifice, but dread;
The Lamb in heaven adored for aye.

His Godhead on the Cross He veiled;
His Manhood here He veileth too:
But Faith has eagle eyes unscaled;
And Love to Him she loves is true.

" I will not leave you orphans. Lo!
While lasts the world with you am I."
Saviour! we see Thee not; but know,
With burning hearts, that Thou art nigh!

He comes! Blue Heaven, thine incense breathe
O'er all the consecrated sod;
And thou, O Earth, with flowers enwreathe
The steps of thine advancing God!

Corpus Christi.

XXV.

What music swells on every gale?
What heavenly Herald rideth past?
Vale sings to vale, "He comes; all hail!"
Sea sighs to sea, "He comes at last."

The Earth bursts forth in choral song;
Aloft her "Lauda Sion" soars;
Her myrtle boughs at once are flung
Before a thousand Minster doors.

Far on the white processions wind
Through wood and plain and street and court:
The kings and prelates pace behind
The King of kings in seemly sort.

The incense floats on Grecian air;
Old Carmel echoes back the chant;
In every breeze the torches flare
That curls the waves of the Levant.

On Ramah's plain — in Bethlehem's bound —
Is heard to-day a gladsome voice:
"Rejoice," it cries, "the lost is found!
With Mary's joy, O Earth, rejoice!"

XXVI.

Pleasant the swarm about the bough;
  The meadow-whisper round the woods;
And for their coolness pleasant now
  The murmur of the falling floods.

Pleasant beneath the thorn to lie,
  And let a summer fancy loose;
To hear the cuckoo's double cry;
  To make the noon-tide sloth's excuse.

Panting, but pleased, the cattle stand
  Knee-deep in water-weed and sedge,
And scarcely crop the greener band
  Of osiers round the river's edge.

But hark! Far off the south wind sweeps
  The golden-foliaged groves among,
Renewed or lulled, with rests and leaps —
  Ah! how it makes the spirit long

To drop its earthly weight, and drift
  Like yon white cloud, on pinions free,
Beyond that mountain's purple rift,
  And o'er that scintillating sea!

XXVII.

Sing on, wide winds, your anthems vast!
The ear is richer than the eye:
Upon the eye no shape can cast
Such impress of Infinity.

And thou, my soul, thy wings of might
Put forth:—thou too, one day shalt soar,
And, onward borne in heavenward flight,
The starry universe explore;

Breasting that breeze which waves the bowers
Of Heaven's bright forest never mute,
Whereof perchance this earth of ours
Is but the feeblest forest-fruit.

"The Spirit bloweth where He wills"—
O Effluence of that Life Divine
Which wakes the Universe, and stills,
In Thy strong refluence make us Thine!

Cœli enarrant.

XXVIII.

Sole Maker of the Worlds! They lay
A barren blank, a void, a nought,
Beyond the ken of solar ray
Or reach of archangelic thought.

Thou spak'st; and they were made! Forth sprang
From every region of the abyss,
Whose deeps, fire-clov'n, with anthems rang,
The spheres new-born and numberless.

Thou spak'st: — upon the winds were found
The astonished Eagles. Awed and hushed
Subsiding seas revered their bound;
And the strong forests upward rushed.

Before the Vision angels fell,
As though the face of God they saw;
And all the panting miracle
Found rest within the arms of Law.

Perfect, O God, Thy primal plan—
  That scheme frost-bound by Adam's sin:
Create, within the heart of Man,
  Worlds meet for Thee; and dwell therein.

From Thy bright realm of Sense and Nature,
  Which flowers enwreathe and stars begem,
Shape Thou Thy Church; the crowned Creature;
  The Bride; the New Jerusalem!

Caro factus est.

XXIX.

When from beneath the Almighty Hand
The suns and systems rushed abroad,
Like coursers which have burst their band,
Or torrents when the ice is thawed;

When round in luminous orbits flung
The great stars gloried in their might;
Still, still, a bridgeless gulf there hung
'Twixt Finite things and Infinite.

That crown of light creation wore
Was edged with vast unmeasured black;
And all of natural good she bore
Confessed her supernatural lack.

For what is Nature at the best?
An arch suspended in its spring;
An altar-step without a priest;
A throne whereon there sits no king.

As one stone-blind that fronts the morn,
The world before her Maker stood,
Uplifting suppliant hands forlorn —
God's creature, yet how far from God!

He came. That world His priestly robe;
The Kingly Pontiff raised on high
The worship of the starry globe: —
The gulf was bridged, and God was nigh.

XXX.

A WOMAN "clothed with the sun," *
  Yet fleeing from the Dragon's rage! —
The strife in Eden-bowers begun
  Swells upward to the latest age.

That woman's Son is throned on high;
  The angelic hosts before Him bend:
The sceptre of His empery
  Subdues the worlds from end to end.

Yet still the sword goes through her heart,
  For still on earth His Church survives.
In her that woman holds a part:
  In her she suffers, wakes, and strives.

Around her head the stars are set;
  A dying moon beneath her wanes:
But he that letteth still must let:
  The Power accurst awhile remains.

Break up, strong Earth, thy stony floors,
  And snatch to penal caverns dun
That Dragon from the pit that wars
  Against the woman and her Son!

* Rev. xii. 1.

XXXI.

No ray of all their silken sheen
The leaves first fledged have lost as yet:
Unfaded, near the advancing queen
Of flowers, abides the violet.

The rose succeeds — her month is come. —
The flower with sacred passion red:
She sings the praise of martyrdom,
And Him for whom His martyrs bled.

The perfect work of May is done:
Hard by a new perfection waits: —
The twain, a sister and a nun,
A moment parley at the grates.

The whiter Spirit turns in peace
To hide her in the cloistral shade: —
'Tis time that you should also cease,
Slight carols in her honour made.

EPILOGUE.

Epilogue.

Regent of Change, thou waning Moon,
Whom they, the sons of night, adore,
Her feet are on thee! Late or soon
Heap up upon the expectant shore

The tides of Man's Intelligence;
Or backward to the blackening deep
Remit them: Knowledge won from Sense
But sleeps to wake, and wakes to sleep.

Where are the hands that reared on high
Heaven-threat'ning Babel? where the might
Of them, that giant progeny,
The Deluge dealt with? Lost in night.

The child who knows his creed doth stretch
A sceptred hand o'er Space, and hold
The end of all those threads that catch
In wisdom's net the starry fold.

The Sabbath comes: the work-days six
Of Time go by; meantime the key,
O salutary crucifix,
Of all the worlds, we clasp in thee.

Truth deeplier felt by none than him*
Who at the Alban mountain's foot,
Wandering no more in shadows dim,
Lay down, a lamb-like offering mute.

His mighty lore found rest at last
In Faith, and woke in God. Ah, Friend!
When life which is not Life is past,
Pray that like thine may be my end.

Thy fair large front; thine eyes' grave blue;
Thine English ways so staid and plain; —
Through native rosemaries and rue
Memory creeps back to thee again.

Beside thy dying bed were writ
Some snatches of these random rhymes;
Weak Song, how happy if with it
Thy name should blend in after times.

Rome, April 27, 1857.

* Robert Isaak Wilberforce.

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